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METHODISM

IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

INDIANA COLLECTION

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE

TO FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

FOREWORD

Several years ago, I was requested to locate, if possible, some documentary evidence, confirming the year 1828 as being the year in which the Methodist Church was established in Fort Wayne.

The search has been somewhat difficult because the records of the early church were not carefully preserved, and are no longer in existence.

The authorities examined, it will be noticed, are not entirely in agreement as to the date the first mission was established, nor as to the person or persons instrumental in the establishment. It is well recorded, however, that the first mission was the forerunner of what is now known as the First Methodist Church.

Because of the difficulty experienced in getting at the exact truth of these matters, the accuracy of some of the statements herein may be open to question.

EARL L. CARVIN

June, 1956.

METHODISM

IN FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

with particular reference to the First Methodist Church,

by

EARL L. CARVIN

* * * * *

Records of early Methodism in this community, which had been cared for at First Church, unfortunately were accidentally destroyed many years ago. There is now at First Church a secretary's minute book, dating from 1846 and a brief history prepared by Alfred S. Johns, who became a trustee of Wayne Street Church when it was organized in 1849.

First Church celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary in 1928. An elaborate pageant depicting the early days of the church in Fort Wayne was produced. The script was written by Mrs. Effie Easley-Banks, with the collaboration of Dr. Charles H. Smith, then Pastor of First Church. Much of the material used must have been secured from books at the Library. Some of the incidents and events depicted appear to be largely legendary, without much historical background, so far as can be confirmed by any authorities that are now available. The year 1828 appears on the corner stone of First Church as the year in which the church was established in Fort Wayne. It seems very likely that the date is correct, otherwise it would not have been used. However, so far as I have been able to discover, there is no confirmation of this date in available records. There appears to be no authentic record of a mission or church in Fort Wayne prior to 1830. The authors reviewed are as follows:

Circuit Rider Days in Indiana and Religion on the American Frontier, both by William Warren Sweet.

Early History of the West and Northwest, by Stephen R. Beggs.

History of the Upper Maumee Valley, by Brant & Fuller.

History of the Maumee River Basin, by Slocum & Robertson.

Indiana Methodism, by the Reverend F. C. Holliday.

A Historical Record, by Alfred S. Johns.

I will refer to these authorities in the order listed.

WILLIAM WARREN SWEET

"Circuit Rider Days in Indiana" was published in 1916 by W. K. Stewart & Company. Other than a list of appointments from the time the Indiana Conference was organized in 1832 to and including the year 1843, there is not much of interest relating to First Church, Fort Wayne.

"Religion on the American Frontier" was published as recently as 1946, by the University of Chicago Press, and covers the period from 1783 to 1840. Volume IV refers to the Methodists, and contains the journals of the Illinois Conference for the years 1824 to 1831, inclusive. On October 6, 1830, the Illinois Conference at the annual session, approved the following: "On motion, resolved that Fort Wayne and its vicinity be, and same is hereby, constituted a station to be denominated the Fort Wayne Mission, and that it be attached to the Madison District." Nehemiah B. Griffith was appointed as the Pastor.

REVEREND STEPHEN R. BEGGS

"Early History of the West and Northwest" was published in 1868 by the Methodist Book Concern. One item of interest is a quotation from an account written by A. Wood, D.D., which reads: "Previous to the year 1832, all of the

settlements of Northern Indiana were visited by missionaries from Michigan, which was then in what was called the North Ohio Conference."

The Author writes: " The next year, 1828, I was sent to Wayne Circuit, on which Richmond and Centerville were the principal towns. My circuit bordered on the Ohio State line. William Evans was my colleague and John Strange was my presiding elder. This was a four weeks circuit, and in it I preached nearly every day and often twice." In the next chapter he writes: "This year, 1829, I was sent to the Crawfordsville Circuit with Brother Strange as presiding elder. I was alone on the Circuit, which embraced the following towns: Crawfordsville and Lafayette; from thence to Delphi and on to Logansport; once out to Fort Wayne, and back to Attica; then down to Portland and Covington."

BRANT AND FULLER

"History of the Upper Maumee Valley" was published in 1889. The authors refer to the arrival in Fort Wayne in 1824 of James Holman, a Methodist Preacher, and state that, "Meetings continued until in the latter part of 1830. Alexander Wiley of the Ohio Conference came to establish a Mission, to be embraced in his district. About the same time Nehemiah B. Griffith was appointed to take charge of the Mission. He was succeeded by Richard S. Robinson and later by Boyd Phelps, under whose ministration it was named the Maumee Mission. The last missionary sent by the Ohio Conference was Freeman Farnsworth, and Maumee Mission became Fort Wayne Circuit."

SLOCUM AND ROBERTSON

"History of the Maumee River Basin" was undated, but was written during the time when Reverend Charles A. Rowan was the Pastor at First Church, 1905 to 1909. Like Brant and Fuller they write, "the early meetings were con-

tinued until the latter part of 1830, when a mission was established and placed in charge of Reverend Griffith." They give a history of the first church being erected in 1840; the church being divided in 1849; the name being changed to the Berry Street Methodist Episcopal Church in 1851, and again changed to the First Methodist Episcopal Church in 1902.

REVEREND F. C. HOLLIDAY

"Indiana Methodism" was published in 1873 by Hitchcock and Walden, Cincinnati. He writes: "This year, (1830) Fort Wayne Mission was organized, and N. B. Griffith was the Missionary. Fort Wayne Mission was in the Madison District, of which A. Wiley was the presiding elder. In 1831 N. B. Griffith was sent to the South Bend Mission, of which Samuel Martin was the leader. In 1832 the Illinois Conference was divided and Indiana Conference was constituted. The first session of the Indiana Conference was held in New Albany. There were five presiding elders:

Madison District	James Havens
Charlestown District	William Shanks
Indianapolis District	Allen Wiley
Vincennes District	James L. Thompson
Missionary District	James Armstrong

The Missionary District was composed of:

Upper Wabash Mission	Samuel C. Cooper
St. Joseph and South	R. S. Robinson
Bend Mission	and G. M. Beswick
Kalamazoo Mission	James T. Robe
Fort Wayne Mission	Boyd Phelps
LaPorte Mission	James Armstrong

In 1831 the Fort Wayne Mission was included in the Madison District."

ALFRED S. JOHNS

"A Historical Record" was dated August 30, 1901. Mr. Johns was then eighty-nine years of age, and his death occurred within eight months thereafter, April 12, 1902. It is not surprising that the paper contains some inaccuracies, which seems to be the case. He quoted from a letter he had received from Joseph Holman, who was the first Methodist to arrive in Fort Wayne. He was a brother of James Holman, the Preacher. He preceded his brother by one year, having been sent here in 1823 to take charge of the Federal Land Office. The date of the letter was not given, but Mr. Holman must have been several years older than Mr. Johns, and the letter had no doubt been in the hands of Mr. Johns for some time. Just how old Mr. Holman may have been and how good his memory was when the letter was written are unknown factors. The quotation reads:

"About this year, 1827 or 1828, Brother Nehemiah Griffith preached for us about two years, and did much good. Brother Richard S. Robinson came next and remained one year; was a good young man." Mr. Johns attempted to list the Ministers that followed the Reverend Griffith; also some of the presiding elders, including a man by the name of Alexander Wiley. He stated that up to 1834 the Mission was under the control of the Ohio Conference, "and was a very large field to travel, commencing at St. Marys, (Ohio) taking in Fort Wayne, extending to South Bend and Logansport, up the Wabash River to St. Marys, in Ohio, sixty miles South of here. It was known as St. Marys Mission." This shows Mr. Johns to be in agreement with Brant and Fuller relative to the control of the Mission by the Ohio Conference; also concerning the person and activities of one, Alexander Wiley. In the pageant given by First Church in 1928, "Elder" Alexander Wiley was frequently mentioned as having been the founder of the first mission in Fort Wayne. It was generally accepted that he came from St. Marys, Ohio,

to organize the mission, and claim it as a part of his district. While this is confirmed by Brant and Fuller, William Warren Sweet makes no mention of the Ohio Conference nor Alexander Wiley.

In July, 1953 I visited the Slocum Library at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio. While there I examined the minutes of the Ohio Conference for the years 1826 to 1832, inclusive. I was unable to find any reference to missionary work in Indiana, nor the name of Wiley among the lists of ministers. Nor, was there any reference to a St. Marys Mission. Having failed to find any record in the Ohio Conference minutes of an Alexander Wiley, nor any missionary work in Indiana, it seems logical to believe that the Fort Wayne Mission was more likely organized by Allen Wiley, who according to Sweet, was presiding elder of the Madison District, which covered the whole East side of the State, including Fort Wayne; that Allen Wiley, or someone appointed by him, possibly Stephen R. Beggs, came as early as 1828 and officially recognized the congregation, which was taken into the Indiana Conference in 1830, as recorded by Sweet. According to Sweet, Reverend Griffith was not in Fort Wayne until 1830, as he had appointments to charges in Southern Indiana for several years prior to coming to Fort Wayne. Holliday and Sweet both give glowing accounts of the activities of Allen Wiley, as being one of the leading Methodists of his day.

I have tried in every way I can think of to find some documentary proof that the Methodist Church was officially established in Fort Wayne in 1828, the year that appears on the corner stone at First Church, but so far have been unsuccessful. I firmly believe, however, that there was a mission here as early as 1828, on more or less a trial basis, very possibly under the direction of Allen Wiley, presiding elder of the Madison District at that time. His name is found at times as A. Wiley, and it is easy to see how some

one could have thought that his name was Alexander. Holliday's "Indiana Methodism" was published sixteen years before Brant and Fuller's "History of the Upper Maumee Valley". He makes no reference to the Ohio Conference, nor does he go into the history of Fort Wayne prior to 1830.

THE FOLLOWING, I believe, can be relied upon as being quite accurate:

The first Methodist family in Fort Wayne was that of Joseph Holman. They arrived in 1823, to be followed a year later by James Holman, a brother of Joseph, and a Methodist preacher. They with a very few others held meetings for a number of years, in various places, until a Mission was officially organized by the Church. A record of the meeting places follows:

1. A schoolhouse where the County Jail now stands, on Calhoun Street.
2. A carpenter shop. A. S. Johns wrote: "It stood where Kane's Toy Store now stands." (1901).
3. A cabinet shop. Mr. Johns wrote: "This was located on the alley in the rear of the present Rurode Dry Goods Store." (Rurode's faced Calhoun Street just South of Main Street.)
4. The old Court House.
5. A house at the Southeast corner of Clinton and East Wayne Streets.
6. A school on the East side of Lafayette Street, between East Berry and East Wayne Streets.
7. The first church building, known as the Berry Street Chapel, at the corner of West Berry and South Harrison Streets where the Van Orman Hotel now stands, erected in 1840.
8. The second church building, a brick structure, erected on the same site, completed in 1864.

9. The present church, at the corner of East Wayne and Lafayette Streets, dedicated in 1903.

LOOKING FORWARD FROM 1840

Prior to 1840 the church had held meetings in several places, but in this year a lot at the northeast corner of Berry and Harrison was purchased and a small frame church was erected. This was named the Berry Street Chapel of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The cost of the lot was $400.00, which the Church took five years to pay. It was known as Lot No. 517 of Hanna's Addition to the City of Fort Wayne. Samuel Hanna was the owner, and upon receiving payment in full, executed a deed bearing date of June 25, 1845. There is no record of the cost of the church building.

In 1844 the lot next door, Lot No. 516, was purchased from Mr. Hanna; also for $400.00. On this lot the Church erected a parsonage. The deed to this lot was executed Dec. 29, 1851. The records indicate that about $200.00 of interest was paid on the two lots, making the total cost about $1,000.00.

When the second deed was executed, there was still owing to Mr. Hanna the amount of $203.97, which amount one of the Trustees, Mr. George R. Hartman, paid and received from the Church an interest bearing certificate of indebtedness. He waited several years for payment.

The exact cost of the parsonage is unknown, but a record of a subscription list, taken for the express purpose of building the parsonage, was made. This gave the names of the donors and the amount each gave. The list totaled $1,245.69. An inventory of the furnishings for the parsonage showed the cost to be $264.78. Whether these two amounts covered the total cost is unknown.

In 1858 steps were taken toward the building of a new, larger church. Subscription lists were sent out, an Architect was employed, and the work of building began to progress even though slowly. The new church was completed in 1864.

The lists recorded indicated total subscriptions of $13,-234.00 were received. However, not all was paid. No definite figure as to the total cost of the structure is available, but three years later, at the Fourth Quarterly Conference, held February 19, 1867, the Trustees placed a valuation of the church at $25,000.00, and of the parsonage at $6,000.

The foregoing information is recorded in a minute book kept by the Trustees from March 1846 to February 1870. The last entry covered a meeting held February 7, 1870.

SOME INTERESTING ANECDOTES FROM THE MINUTE BOOK

1. The annual conference was held in the Fall of the year. Rev. J. G. D. Pettijohn was the appointee in the years 1854 and 1855. At a meeting of the Trustees, held June 25, 1856, the secretary's minutes noted: "Bro. B. Webster, Preacher in Charge. Bros. S. R. Ball, Local Preacher, visitor." Rev. Webster presented a bill for $5.10 which he had paid for minor repairs at the parsonage, which indicates he was living there. It appears that he had been sent to replace the Rev. Pettijohn. Rev. L. W. Monson was the appointee at the next annual conference.

Reverend Stephen R. Ball, the visitor, had served this church for two years, 1836 to 1838. At this time he was located at the Angola church. He requested our church to give the Angola church the Pulpit Lamps and Globes, which were no longer in use, as our church had recently installed Gas lights. The request was granted.

2. Among the names shown in the subscription lists for the new church was one for a person by the name of Alexander Wiley, who subscribed and paid $10.00. This in mentioned because of the previous discussion of a person by this name, earlier in this paper.

3. The old church (the one built in 1840), was sold for $150.00. The record shows $40.00 of the $150.00 having been paid.

4. At a meeting of the trustees, held May 2, 1860, George R. Hartman, Secretary, was authorized to sell 80 acres of land belonging to the church, "on the most favorable and best terms he could."

5. A subscription list, dated May 21, 1855, was "for the purpose of building a house upon the corner of the church lot, — for the benefit of Mary Pickering, during her life time."

6. The last entry in the minute book recorded a called meeting of the trustees to consider a proposition from one, George W. Mitchell, who was serving the church as sexton. It was agreed, "that the aforesaid trustees hereby grant to George W. Mitchell the privilege of putting an addition on the West end of the Sexton House, which he now occupies, to extend to the side walk, with the privilege of occupying the same for five years."

The record details further the agreement. The meager information supplied by these last two paragraphs indicates a second house was erected on the church property, for the use of Mary Pickering, whose relationship to the church is not stated, and as a residence for the sexton, after Mary Pickering was through with it.

7. The minute book referred to was kept by Trustee, George R. Hartman, who served as Trustee from April 7, 1846, when he was elected. There is evidence that some

of the first entries were not made until some time after the meetings had been held. The second meeting was held Dec. 21, 1849, more than three years following the meeting at which Mr. Hartman was elected. Moreover, there appears to have been certain corrections made in the date of the first meeting, as the "46" is quite plainly written over a year that was first inserted and then erased. These are matters of little consequence, and are related only to show how difficult it is to establish the truth concerning events that occurred many years ago.

LOOKING FORWARD FROM 1870

There is very little information of interest to be recorded in this paper, covering the period between 1870 and the end of the nineteenth century. The church continued to prosper and soon found it necessary to seek a new location and a larger church. In 1883, during the first pastorate of the Reverend J. K. Walts, the project of building a new church was first taken up. The property was offered to the Government for the new Federal Building and negotiations had been about closed, when the First Presbyterian Church, at the corner of Berry and Clinton Streets, burned and that site was purchased instead.

On October 16, 1901, the property was sold to Ernest C. Rurode, head of the Rurode Drygoods Store, for $40,000.00, against which there was a mortgage of $3,700.00, leaving a balance of $36,300.00 for the purchase of a new church and parsonage. The trustees who signed the deed to Mr. Rurode were: Jacob Hetrick, President, Chester Scarlet, Secretary, George Brackenridge, Fred C. Parham, John T. Leach, Amos Sine, C. C. Schlatter and Henry N. Bossler.

The committee appointed to secure the new location were: George W. Brackenridge, H. E. Noble, Chester Scarlet and Fred C. Parham.

The Finance and Building Committee was made up of: Fred C. Parham, Chairman, T. R. Spalding, O. J. Kover, I. N. Medsker and Jacob Hetrick.

On November 22, 1901, the second lot from the corner of East Wayne and Lafayette Streets, 37 feet, was purchased from Thomas and Lillian C. Clark for $7,000.00. There was a brick house on this lot, which was used as a parsonage until 1920, when the Melching property to the West was purchased; then as a Parish House for Sunday School purposes, until it was demolished to make room for the present Wesley Hall.

On November 29, 1901, the corner lot, 53 feet, was purchased from Miss Margaret A. Tower for $5,000.00. The house on this lot was demolished to make room for the church. The cost of having the house razed was $210.00, but this was largely recovered from the sale of salvage. There is a record of the sale of old bricks to the extent of $116.00. The building fund was further enhanced by the sale of the pews from the Berry Street Church to Zion Lutheran Church at Woodburn for $250.00.

The Trustees who received the deeds to these two properties were: George W. Brackenridge, Henry N. Bossler, Chester Scarlet, John A. Bookwalter, Jacob Hetrick, Fred C. Parham, Amos Sine, Christian O. Schlatter and John T. Leach.

Charles Henry and Son, Akron, Ohio, were employed as the Architects. The contract for the building was let to Dudley and Leffler, Leipsic, Ohio, at a price of $21,710.00. Other contracts were let as follows:

1. William Carter and Sons, heat. and vent. .....$ 600.00
2. Robert Spice, plumbing 399.73
3. A. Hattersley and Sons, lighting 800.00

4. C. C. Schlatter and Co., hardware 284.00
5. Rurode Drygoods Store, carpets 844.00
6. Wabash Furniture Co., pews 877.00
7. Foster Furniture Co., chairs 291.00
8. Henry Pilcher and Sons, organ 2,000.00
9. A. A. Andrews and Co., pulpit furniture 80.00

(This is not intended to be a complete accounting of the total cost).

The Trustees elected at the last election held in the old Berry Street Church on April 4, 1902, were: George W. Brackenridge, John A. Bookwalter, Henry N. Bossler, Chester Scarlet, Jacob Hetrick, Fred C. Parham, Thomas R. Spalding, C. A. Robbins and C. A. Kirkpatrick. Francis A. Reichelderfer served as secretary of the meeting.

THE CORNER STONE OF THE NEW CHURCH

The corner stone laying ceremony was conducted in the afternoon of July 29, 1902. An introductory address was given by the Pastor, the Rev. J. K. Walts. A hymn was sung, followed by a reading of a portion of the 132nd Psalm by the Rev. A. S. Preston, Pastor of the Wayne Street Church. The Rev. Jay C. Dorwin, Pastor of Simpson Church, read from II Corinthians. George W. Brackenridge, a member since 1842, reminisced, recounting much of the history of the church from the beginning. Dr. C. B. Stemen, who held degrees of M.D. and D.D., spoke on, "The spread of the Christian Church." The congregation sang "America", after which a former Pastor, the Rev. C. C. Cissel, spoke briefly.

The stone was then placed in position by the Rev. W. H. Daniel, Presiding Elder of the Fort Wayne District. On the Wayne Street side of the stone is carved "1902", while

THE CHURCH AND PARSONAGE AS THEY APPEARED AT DEDICATION — 1903.
Automobiles Are of More Recent Vintage.

GETTLE MEMORIAL C
Consecrated By Bishop R

APEL AND WESLEY HALL
ard C. Raines, May 15, 1955

GROUND BREAKING CEREMONIES, FEBRUARY 21, 1954

Fred E. Raake, Chairman, Plans and Construction Committee, At the Shovel.

on the Lafayette Street side there is the following inscription:

Organizd

1828

Called Berry Street M. E.

1851 - 1902

There was inserted in the sealed metal box, that was enclosed in the corner stone, the following articles:

> A Bible, hymnal, church discipline, year book of Berry Street Church, Sabbath School periodicals, a list of officers and members of the church, an Epworth League album and copies of the Fort Wayne newspapers.

It was the desire of the congregation to have the contents of the corner stone at the Berry Street Church transferred to the new corner stone, but the stone was situated within the walls, not exposed to view in such a way that its removal was impractical, and the idea was abandoned. (There appears to be no record now, as to what disposition was made of the stone and its contents, when the church was demolished.)

One of those in attendance at the corner stone laying, also witnessed the corner stone laying at Berry Street Church, in 1860. This was Mrs. Laura Trowbridge, who remained a faithful member of the new church until her death, which occurred November 7, 1942, at the age of 102 years.

George W. Brackenridge and wife, who were also in attendance, remembered very clearly many of the early events connected with the history of the church, particularly the dedication of the brick Berry Street edifice. Mr. Brackenridge was born in 1825 and came to Fort Wayne in 1830, with his Father, Captain Robert Brackenridge, who was the Registrar of the Public Land office for a number of years. He joined

the Berry Street church in 1842. His wife became a member in 1846.

THE NEW CHURCH

Upon moving to the new church, the name was changed to First Methodist Episcopal Church. The dedicatory services were held Sunday Morning, May 24, 1903. Bishop Isaac W. Joyce delivered the dedicatory address. The Prayer was given by the Rev. W. H. Daniel, Presiding Elder of the Fort Wayne District. Mrs. F. E. Stouder was at the organ. Bishop Joyce again preached at the Evening service, The Prayer was given by the Rev. C. G. Hudson, D.D., and Mrs. Stouder was again at the organ.

Further services were held the following Tuesday and Thursday evenings. At the Tuesday service, an Inaugural Organ Recital was given, with Professor Harrison M. Wild of Chicago at the organ. On Thursday Evening a "Church Furnishing Shower and Reception" was provided by the Ladies' Aid Society.

Much space was given by the local newspapers that week-end to the publishing of pictures of the old and the new churches; also prominent persons who had a part in the ceremonies. It seems appropriate to quote some of the material printed. With reference to Rev. Walts the article reads: "In his pastorate of a little over a year of the First Methodist Church, Rev. J. K. Walts has been very successful in his work. The congregation has prospered and increased during his pastorate and the charge is in a flourishing condition. While the building committee has had charge of the erection of the new edifice, he was a great assistance to them in the carrying out of the plans. Rev. Walts is a native Hoosier. He was born in Floyd County of this State and was reared as a farmer's boy. He attended the district schools and afterwards, in 1870, graduated from DePauw

University at Greencastle, and then became principal of the High School at New Albany, and later County Superintendent of Floyd County. It was while he was president and secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association at New Albany that he entered evangelistic work and began the study of the ministry to which he was admitted in 1876 at Richmond. His first charge was at Dublin and Louisville.

Since then he has served at Lima, Waterloo, Warsaw, Richmond, Winchester, Auburn and Logansport. He was also the pastor of Berry Street Church for three years, beginning in 1883. He was returned to this City one year ago last April, and is now on his second year as pastor. He is an earnest public speaker and an effective church worker."

A part of another article reads: "The superintendent on the part of the committee in the construction of the edifice was I. N. Medsker. He has given the work much of his time and his services have been invaluable, the committee feeling that he deserves much credit for the excellnt judgment and business ability he has displayed."

Another excerpt from the same article reads: "The congregation has a magnificent church edifice. It also has a fine church parsonage, for on the west side of the lots purchased was the George A. Gale residence. It was left standing and is now the home of the pastor of the church." (This is the only instance where the name of George A. Gale has been observed. The deed to the church was signed by Thomas and Lillian C. Clark.)

Another excerpt reads: The work of furnishing the church throughout was practically completed yesterday. It was done by the Ladies, the committee being as follows: Mrs. T. R. Spalding, Chairman; Mrs. Ada Matson, Mrs. Emma Geerken, Mrs. B. F. Shertzer and Miss Mattie Wohlfort."

Then the newspaper account continues with a rather

lengthy detailed description of the building and the inside arrangement, which article closed with the following: "All of the interior finish throughout the building is in hardwood with a natural wood painters finish, the ceilings are broken with ornamental work and the walls elegantly frescoed, with Biblical pictures that are a credit to the artist's brush. The accoustic properties of the auditorium are superb, a conversational tone being heard distinctly from the pulpit in all parts of the audience rooms, even when the Sunday school department doors are thrown open".

The church continued to prosper and increase its membership and attendance, with the result that more room was needed. The next step was the purchase of the brick home that adjoined the church property on the west. Under date of February 28, 1920, the owner, Mrs. Caroline Melching, in consideration of the sum of $11,500.00, executed a deed to the church. This included fifty feet of frontage and gave the church a total of 140 feet on Wayne Street.

The property was taken over as a parsonage, and the former parsonage was converted to Sunday school uses. It was used as a parsonage for a number of years, until an assistant pastor was assigned to the church, in 1937. The pastor purchased a home at 1609 Crescent Avenue, and the parsonage was remodeled to provide an apartment on the second floor, with facilities for young people on the main floor. The church office was established in the front room of the main floor.

In 1945, the new parsonage at 133 West Lexington Avenue, was purchased and the Melching house was remodeled. The kitchen in the apartment was modernized, while a rearrangement of the main floor provided studies for both pastors and additional cabinet and filing space in the office. The expense of the remodelling amounted to approximately $5,000.00.

In the fall of 1953, plans were rapidly taking shape to erect Wesley Hall and Gettle Memorial Chapel. This necessitated the purchase of another parsonage for the assistant pastor and the demolition of the two houses. The property at 1426 East Columbia Avenue was purchased at a cost of $13,000.00. The deed was executed September 15, 1953 and was signed by Robert H and Iconotta M. Bucher.

Another property owned by the church is the cottage at Epworth Forest. The lot was acquired by a deed from the Foundation, dated August 31, 1928, for a consideration of $600.00. The lot was described as being, "lot numbered forty-eight (48) in Block C in the plat of Epworth Forest in Section eleven (11), Township thirty-three (33) North, Range seven (7) East, in Kosciusko County, Indiana. The cottage itself cost $1,150 while plumbing, wiring, etc., cost an additional $550.00.

The constant struggle of the church in its efforts to meet its financial obligations is well revealed in a review of the minutes of the official board meetings. Seldom was there a time when the church was entirely free of debt. At times the debt and future requirements were indeed troublesome matters with which the board found difficulty in dealing. This was especially true during the depression days of the twenties and early thirties.

The Reverend John Wesley Potter was transferred to First Church in 1920, during the conference year. He preached his first sermon on October 24, 1920. Reverend A. G. Neal, who preceded him, was placed in charge of the Goshen (now Warsaw) District, as District Superintendent. With the coming of Dr. Potter several methods of increasing the facilities of the church were talked of. The Wayne Street church was also in need of more room. Rather than for both churches to engage in expensive remodelling, it was in the minds of some of the leaders of both churches that

they should merge, and build a nice church somewhere in the region of downtown Fort Wayne, that would be a credit to the Methodist Church in this community. Nothing came of these negotiations, however, and First Church, after much delay and discussion as to whether they should try to locate a new site for a new church, or build on to the old, finally settled upon the plan of completing the basement, and using it for the additional room needed.

This project was carried through, with the interior of the church being redecorated in the summer of 1923. The cost of this added to the cost of completing the basement and the purchase of the Melching property brought the total indebtedness of the church to approximately $35,000.00.

A rededication service was held Sunday, September 9, 1923, with the Bishop Frederic D. Leete conducting the service. Pledges totalling about $40,000 payable over a period of five years, were received. General economic conditions did not improve and a heavy shrinkage in those pledges was experienced, with the result that several additional campaigns for funds were required before the indebtedness was wipd out, and any further progress could be accomplished.

In June, 1930, the "Pioneer Fund" was created, and pledges for about $13,000.00 were received. In the Summer of 1934 the Church was again redecorated, and the "Fresco Fund" was established, to cover the cost, with anything over to apply on the indebtedness. There is no good record of the amount received from this campaign.

In 1935 the organ was modernized, and the "Organ and Jubilee Fund" was created to cover the cost and the remainder of the indebtedness. About $6,600 was subscribed.

At the Morning Service, Sunday, November 7, 1937, it was announced that the church was entirely out of debt,

and a note-burning ceremony was conducted. The balance in the treasury was stated as being $1,264.10.

Again in 1940, the church was redecorated and the "Expansion and Renovation Fund" was established, to cover the cost and add to the building fund. About $12,500.00 was subscribed.

Because of increased membership and attendance, the need for additional facilities became very critical. After much discussion, it was decided to employ an architect and prepare plans for an educational unit, to be built across the back of the property, immediately back of the two houses, and cornering up to the church. Estimates based on 1940 costs indicated the cost of the project would run to $120,000. The next step was to raise the money, and in 1944 the "New Building Fund" was established. The Reverend Alton E. Lowe, of the Methodist Board of Church Extension, was employed to assist in the campaign for funds. Upon his recommendation the effort was to raise one-half of the amount needed, $60,000, in weekly pledges, payable over a period of 100 weeks, with another campaign for the remainder to follow at the end of the period.

A little over $60,000 was raised, but the second campaign was not so successful. An amount of $45,000 was raised; however, it was understood that the first $15,000 paid in would be used to pay for the new parsonage at 133 West Lexington Avenue, and the cost of revamping the Youth Center, (the Melching House). Prior to the 1944 campaign, a fund of $6,330 had been accumulated.

In the meantime construction costs had trebled, and ideas as to the type of building needed had changed. It was realized that the money available was far short of the amount needed. Therefore, in 1952 the most intensive effort yet was initiated. The Wells Organization was employed to help raise at least $150,000. The goal was reached, with

nearly all pledges payable weekly over a period of 150 weeks, beginning the first Sunday in November, 1952.

In February, 1954, contracts were let for the demolition of the two houses and the construction of an educational unit and chapel, to cost approximately $300,000. The general contract was with Max Irmscher and Sons; the heating and plumbing contract was with Hipskind Heating and Plumbing Company and the electrical contract was with Dix-Kelly Electric Company.

Ground breaking ceremonies were conducted Sunday morning, February 21, 1954, with Fred E. Raake, chairman of the plans and construction committee, lifting the first shovelful of dirt. Those participating in the exercises were, Granville C. Gorrell, chairman of the building council, the chairman of the various committees that made up the building council, the Pastor, the Reverend E. Stanley McKee, the district superintendent, Dr. A. Wesley Pugh, the Pastor Emeritus, Dr. Charles H. Smith, a representative of the Architect's Office, and Will G. Bates, representing the rather small group that were members of the Church when it was erected in 1902.

Construction work proceeded on schedule with the cornerstone laying ceremony being held at ten o'clock, Sunday morning, June 13, 1954. Dr. Edwin R. Garrison, Administrative Assistant to Bishop Raines, had a part in the ceremony and later preached the sermon at the morning service, using as his text, "The fellowship of believers." Moving day, when the Sunday School moved into the new building, occurred Sunday, March 13, 1955. This was the climax to many years of strenuous effort and careful planning; it was a great day in the life of First Church.

The formal opening and consecration ceremonies were conducted Sunday, May 15, 1955, with Bishop Richard C. Raines preaching the sermon. His text was, "And Thy

Neighbor." Dr. A. Wesley Pugh, Superintendent of the Fort Wayne District, was also present and read the scripture lesson.

The ceremonies were continued in the evening with a community Methodist church rally. This extended from 6:30 to 9:00 P.M. with the Reverend Ralph R. High, assistant pastor acting as host pastor. He was assisted by Charles Bonnell, president of the older youth group.

Open House was conducted, Monday Evening, May 16, with refreshments, music and guided tours. Large crowds from the community as well as the church membership joined in the festivities. An all-church carry-in supper was served at 6:30 P.M., Tuesday, May 17, with Verlin J. Harrold presiding. Special music was provided. Dr. Charles C. Ford spoke on the subject, "A Whole Life Program." Mr. George Fenstermacher spoke on the subject, "The Ideal Church School." There were greetings by former pastors; also pictures of moving day. Dr. A. Wesley Pugh, District Superintendent, pronounced the benediction.

It can be safely said that the new Wesley Hall and the attached Gettle Memorial Chapel are of the finest in the land. They were carefully planned to meet the present and future needs for many years to come. At the time the consecration services were held, the Trustees were: Verlin J. Harrold, Fred E. Raake, Robert Stafford, Dr. B. V. Allen, A. Otto Bryan, Clyde E. Flowers, Clyde Kauffman, Arthur Lepper and Clifford C. Weigel. Honorary Trustees were: Will G. Bates, Arthur A. Berry, Dr. Jesse W. Bowers, Frank Chalfant and George E. Chenoweth.

As the time to start construction of the new building drew near, the planning and supervision of the project was placed in the hands of a Building council, composed of five committees listed below. The chairman of the council was Granville C. Gorrell. Dorothy Mills was secretary.

The committees that made up the Building Council are as follows:

Christian Education

Mrs. B. V. Allen, Chairman; Neil Glock, Vice-chairman, Harold Fricke, Mrs. O. C. Kimball, Mrs. Robert Hawkins, Clyde Kauffman and Aden Clark.

Women's Interests

Mrs. C. P. Davis, Chairman; Mrs. Clyde Kauffman, Vice-chairman, Mrs. C. E. Knepple, Mrs. J. H. Stark, Mrs. Theo. Raney, Mrs. J. W. Reardon and Mrs. Robert Stafford.

Promotion

Robert Stafford, Chairman; Carroll Bonnell, Vice-chairman, Dr. E. T. Franklin, Harry A. Lehman, Alden D. Carvin, J. E. Samsen and Earl Elwonger.

Finance

Clyde Flowers, Chairman; Harold Pollitt, Vice-chairman, Denver E. Clark, Verlin J. Harrold, Ben E. Riegel, L. S. Hughbanks and Don Robinson.

Plans and Construction

Fred E. Raake, Chairman; James M. Weaver, Vice-chairman, Arthur G. Lepper, Fred E. McLucas, Dr. B. V. Allen, Oscar A. Tucker and J. W. Reardon.

A sub-committee of the Woman's Committee, charged with the procurement of equipment, was made up of the following:

Mrs. George E. Chenoweth, Chairman; Mrs. Mearl Dukes, Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Glen A. Geiger, Mrs. Fred E. McLucas, Mrs. Irven Cass, Mrs. J. W. Bowers and Mrs. Donald Ewing.

Upon the recommendation of the Plans and Construc-

tion Committee, the Building Council approved the employment of A. M. Strauss, Inc., as the Architect.

The Reverend E. Stanley McKee was the Pastor for seven years, beginning in 1949. He was a very efficient adviser to the Building Council. His tireless efforts, keen foresight and good judgment had much to do with the successful conclusion of the project.

With the reading of the appointments at the close of the Annual Conference session, held at New Castle, May 27, 1956, it was learned that Reverend McKee and his good wife, Ella Mae, were to be transferred to Rushville. While here at First Church, Fort Wayne, they have both been tireless in their efforts to meet the demands of so large a charge. That they were successful in a large measure is attested by the fact that seven hundred additions to the membership of the church were received during their stay with us.

They are to be highly commended for the splendid administration of the affairs of the church in all its various phases, including the completion of the new $300,000 Wesley Hall and Gettle Memorial Chapel.

They take with them to their new location the best wishes of a host of friends that have learned to know and love them during their stay with us.

CONFERENCE APPOINTMENTS TO THIS CHARGE

A list of all appointments to this Charge from 1830 to the present time may be found in the following pages. There is no record of the Pastors who served during the first two years, 1828 to 1830.

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH
Fort Wayne, Indiana

PASTORAL APPOINTMENTS

There is no record, so far as we have been able to find, of the name of the Pastor or Pastors that served this charge during the years 1828 and 1829. Therefore, this list will begin with the year 1830.

1830 Nehemiah B. Griffith
1831 Richard S. Robinson
1832 Boyd Phelps
1833 To be supplied
1834 Freeman Farnsworth
1835 James S. Harrison
1836 Stephen R. Ball
1837 Stephen R. Ball
1838 James T. Robe
1839 Jacob Coleclazer
1840 Francis A. Conwell
1841 Francis A. Conwell
1842 George M. Boyd
1843 Hawley B. Beers
1844 J. S. Bayless
1845 J. S. Bayless
1846 Samuel Brenton
1847 Amasa Johnson
1848 William Wilson
1849 William Wilson
1850 Henry C. Benson
1851 Milton Mahin
1852 Charles W. Miller
1853 Charles W. Miller
1854 J. G. D. Pettijohn
1855 J. G. D. Pettijohn
1856 Lonson W. Monson

1857 J. H. Hull
1858 Almon Greenman
1859 Valentine M. Beamer
1860 Valentine M. Beamer
1861 William Wilson
1862 William Wilson
1863 John Hill
1864 John Hill
1865 John Hill
1866 Ner H. Phillips
1867 Ner H. Phillips
1868 William S. Birch
1869 William S. Birch
1870 Thomas Stabler
1871 A. Marine
1872 A. Marine
1873 A. Marine
1874 Jacob Coleclazer
1875 Clark S. Skinner
1876 Clark S. Skinner
1877 Frost Craft
1878 Frost Craft
1879 Louis A. Retts
1880-2 Charles G. Hudson
1883-5 Jacob K. Walts
1886-8 D. C. Woolpert
1889-91 William M. VanSlyke
1892-94 Mitchell S. Marble
1895-99 C. C. Cissell
1900-01 Hugh J. Norris
1902-04 Jacob K. Walts
1905-09 Charles A. Rowand
1909-12 J. K. Cecil
1912-17 Daniel H. Guild
1917-20 Arthur G. Neal
1920-24 John Wesley Potter

1925-28 Charles B. Croxall
1929-44 Charles H. Smith
1945-46 Valorous L. Clear
1947-48 Jesse W. Fox
1949-55 E. Stanley McKee

ASSISTANT PASTORS

1937-38 Charles W. Cookingham
1939-42 Emory A. Hartman
1942-44 James D. Bell
1945-46 Lloyd G. Sapp
1947-48 Winston O'Neill
1949-50 Kenneth B. Lininger
1951-52 Phill L. Stephens
1953- Ralph Raymond High

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